

Workshops Provide Information For Small Businesses

By Laura Skillman

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Debbie Colvin, Ballard County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences

MAYFIELD, Ky. (Feb. 5, 2003) – The workshop participants who had come to the Graves County office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service had varied business interests. But they shared a common desire to start or improve a small business venture.

A series of four workshops, sponsored by the county Extension agents in the eight Purchase area counties, provided participants with a host of information to aid a small business owner.

The first session was on designing a business and ideas for making money, along with a panel of small business owners who discussed how they got started. Topics discussed at the workshops included developing a business plan, budgeting, payroll, marketing, record keeping, taxes, regulations, funding sources, educational sources, pricing and networking.

"What we hope to accomplish is that after attending the series of workshops they may decide to start a business knowing more about what it takes to manage it and make a profit," said Debbie Colvin, Ballard County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences. "On the other hand, if the result is that after listening to the speakers, they realize it is not for them after all and they decide not to start a business, then we still have succeeded because we've saved them money and heartache."

For those who have already started a small business, the hope is that the information will help them grow their business, she said.

The workshops came about after agents in the

area decided there was a need for training for small business owners, including those in agriculture related ventures and individuals thinking about being a business owner. Speakers for the workshops have included UK specialists, small business owners and a management consultant with the Murray State Small Business Development Center, one of a network of centers with the Kentucky Small Business Development Center. KSBDC's central location is the UK Gatton College of Business and Economics.

KSBDC provides free one-on-one management consultations. Additionally, it provides training and workshops for existing and startup businesses.

Small business is the engine of economic development, said Loretta Daniel, management consultant with the Murray State Small Business Development Center. These businesses represent 99 percent of all new employers in the state and 75 percent of net new jobs, she noted.

Rhonda and Allen Adams began an Internet marketing business in 1999 and attended the seminars to gather information to broaden their business, get new ideas and meet other business people.

"The main thing we got from the first section was from the panel of small business owners. The one thing they all had in common is that they saw a need out there and built on it and went after it," he said. "It was a personal drive to do something. It's good to hear that other people have done what we want to do."

Joan Ellegood has been a volunteer in Extension work for years and today does a lot of work with the Master Clothing program. She owned a beauty shop for a number of years, but asthma caused her to have to shift careers. As a result of the work with Master Clothing, she's made many garments to use as teaching tools and wants to sell some of these items.

"I had a lady who wanted to take some, but I don't know how to price them," she said.

"Someone said I needed to take this class to find out a little bit more about my objectives, costs and to find out exactly what I have in that garment so I'll know what I need to cover my expenses. But, I also have to have something to pay for my time.

"So, I'm here to see if that is going to be featured, what the standards are and how do you figure how much your time's worth," Ellegood said.

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